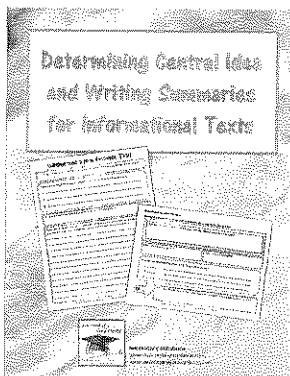


“Attacking the Common Core Standards” – Informational Texts – Part Four: Determining the Central Idea; Providing an Objective Summary

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In Part Four of this series, we are going to take a look at *determining a central idea* and *providing an objective summary* of Informational Texts.

The Standards:

RI.6.2. Determine a central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

RI.7.2. Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.8.2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.9-10.2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

RI.11-12.2. Determine two or more central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to provide a complex analysis; provide an objective summary of the text.

So what do these standards mean? In essence:

Students should demonstrate the ability to articulate the central ideas or main idea –including the purpose, expected outcome or reason for a nonfiction text, providing specifics from the text to support the response. Students should be able to write a summary of the text that is free of bias and personal opinions.

Determining a Central Idea

The central idea can also be called the main idea. It is the chief, key, most important, most vital, most basic reason for reading the text.

1. Take a look at the text features (headings, sub-headings, italic and bold-type words, pictures, diagrams, labels, captions, etc). What hints do they give about the central idea?
2. Determine the purpose of the text (entertain, persuade, inform, show cause/effect, compare/contrast, express an opinion, etc.).
3. Take a look at the organization (structure) of the text. Is it written in chronological order (time), order of importance, or by description?

4. What are the three most important points being made in the text? Often the main ideas are given in the first or the last sentence of the text.
5. What is the CENTRAL idea of the text? (Write your three main points into one complete, succinct sentence)

To check your answer, you should be able to choose sentences that support the main idea and give details that back-up your choice.

Providing an Objective Summary

Once you have determined the central idea of a text, it is important that students are able to find the supporting details and create a succinct and accurate summary of the text.

There are two key parts to addressing this standard: 1) writing a summary of a text, and 2) making it objective or unbiased.

What is a summary?

A shortened form of a text – in your own words.

A statement of the main idea of the text with a few supporting details to support the main idea.

What is bias?

It is important that students know that bias is based on OPINION. In the case of a summary, we are not allowed to insert our own opinion...we must only include FACTS found in the text. By including facts only—that we can provide proof for from a text, we are able to say that our summary is objective and unbiased. In other words, opinions such as “This is a great book” or “The author doesn’t like Jim” or “The snake is a disgusting creature” would NOT be found in a summary.

To help write an objective summary of a text, students must:

1. Determine the central idea of the text (see above).
2. Be able to extract sentences that support this main idea directly from the text. (The summary should be written in the students’ own words, however.)
3. Use these sentences to put together a summary of the text that is clear, concise, and brief.
4. Write a summary that reflects the structure of the original text. For example, if the text is in chronological order, the summary should be as well.
5. Leave out minor details found in the text.

Once students have completed their summary, have them go back and answer these questions:

1. Have I ONLY included the most important or major details in my summary?
2. Is my summary written in my own words?
3. Does my summary include ONLY facts based upon the article?
4. Does my summary follow the structure of the original text?
5. Have I written my summary in only one paragraph?

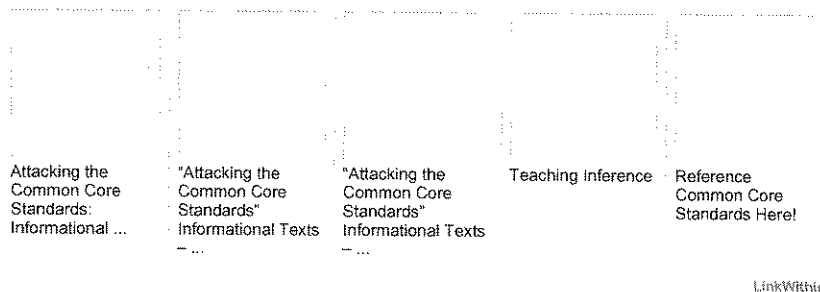
6. Would someone who has never read the complete text clearly understand what it was about from ONLY reading my summary?

If your students can answer YES to all of these, they should be well on their way to mastering the skill of summarizing.

For a helpful handout to help students master central idea and summarizing, check out my new FREEBIE... [Determining Central Idea and Writing Summaries for Informational Texts](#)

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ONE THOUGHT ON "ATTACKING THE COMMON CORE STANDARDS" – INFORMATIONAL TEXTS – PART FOUR: DETERMINING THE CENTRAL IDEA; PROVIDING AN OBJECTIVE SUMMARY"



[Omie](#) on [April 15, 2012 at 9:03 pm](#) said:

This is such a great series! Can't wait to incorporate this information in my classroom. It's a great way to break down a big topic.

Omie

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